



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Asa Hutchinson

José R. Romero, MD, Secretary of Health

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1st Revision May 18, 2020

Phase 2 Revision Effective: June 15, 2020

Modified September 9, 2020: requirements for self-service/buffets

Converted to Guidance February 26, 2021

Guidance on Restaurant Dine-in Operations

The Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, has sole authority over all instances of quarantine, isolation, and restrictions on commerce and travel throughout Arkansas, as necessary and appropriate to control disease in the state of Arkansas as authorized by Ark. Code Ann. §20-7-109—110. Based on available scientific evidence, it is necessary and appropriate to take further action to ensure that COVID-19 remains controlled and that residents and visitors in Arkansas remain safe.

On March 20, 2020, the Secretary of Health, in consultation with the Governor, issued a directive that food establishment and restaurant dine-in operations in the state would cease. This directive provides guidance on resumption of dine in services of food establishments and restaurants through a phased approach. This revision retains many of the Phase 1 distancing and hygiene requirements but allows increased capacity above the phase 1 limit as long as physical distancing is maintained.

Phase 2

- Dine-in service may continue; seating may now increase to up to 66% of total seating capacity. This includes indoor and outdoor dining areas.
- Seating should be adjusted to maintain six (6) feet between occupied seats at adjacent tables.
- Self-service operations, including, but not limited to, salad bars, buffets, and condiment bars may operate with the following requirements:
 - Capacity of the buffet area will be dependent on the ability of customers to maintain six (6) feet physical distance from each other at all times.
 - Facility should provide an employee to monitor physical distancing of six (6) feet is maintained.
 - Masks are required for all persons within the customer self-service area.

- Hand sanitizer and single-use food service gloves should be located at all entrances to the customer self-service area along with signage stating: “Use of hand sanitizer and food service gloves is required for all patrons in this area—Please use a new plate and a new glove for each trip to the buffet/salad bar”.
- Serving utensils shall be replaced every sixty (60) minutes and/or every time a food item is replaced on the buffet.

The following requirements have not changed from Phase 1:

- Reservations should be encouraged when practical. If reservations are not made, physical distancing must be maintained when customers are waiting to be seated.
- All staff who come in contact with patrons must wear a face mask that completely covers their nose and mouth. Staff in the back are encouraged to wear a face mask.
- Gloves used during food preparation should be worn in accordance with the Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments. Glove use by waitstaff and others who do not directly contact food with their hands is optional.
- Patrons must wear a face covering while in the establishment when physical distancing of 6 feet cannot be ensured. This is most likely in entry or waiting areas, while visiting a customer self-service area (buffet, salad bar, etc.), while walking to their seat, visiting the restroom, etc. As before, face coverings may be removed when food or drink arrives.
- All staff shall be screened daily before entering the facility. Any employee with a cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath shall be immediately excluded from the facility.
- Signage must be placed at the front of restaurants to alert patrons not to enter the facility if they are sick or have symptoms such as cough, sore throat, fever, or shortness of breath.
- Monitoring of frequent handwashing and no bare-hand contact of ready-to-eat foods by staff.
- Encourage customers to pre-order meals to reduce time spent in the facility.
- This includes for takeout services.
- Groups shall be limited, not to exceed 10 people.
- Facilities with any employee testing positive shall report the positive result to the Arkansas Department of Health immediately.
- Following each meal service, the tables, chairs, menus and any other frequently contacted surfaces including, but not limited to, condiment

containers, napkin holders and salt/pepper shakers shall be cleaned and disinfected prior to seating the next customer.

- Products with an EPA-approved emerging viral pathogen claims are expected to be effective against COVID-19. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for these products. For a list of EPA-approved emerging pathogen sanitizers: - <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2-covid-19> (Non-food contact surfaces may be sanitized with 1/2 cup of regular, unscented bleach per gallon of water followed by a 5-minute contact time.)
- Food contact surfaces should be sanitized in accordance with §4-501.114 of the Rules Pertaining to Retail Food Establishments.
- Single-Use items including, but not limited to, disposable silverware, cups, lids, and straws should be removed from public access and provided only upon request, unless the Single-Use items are adequately protected from contamination through the use of dispensing devices or packaging.
- Bars housed within restaurants are now allowed to operate, effective May 19, 2020, so long as physical distancing of 6 feet between individuals is maintained.
- Entertainment operations within restaurants (such as live music, in-seat gaming, or arcades) are permitted, effective May 19, 2020. Entertainment involving performers, such as live music or singing, should follow these requirements:
 - The performers or players must be separated from the audience by at least 12 feet and must be limited in number to fifty (50) or fewer.
 - Performers or players may be without a face covering if they are 12 feet from other persons, including other performers.
- In-seat gaming, arcades, billiards, and other games that patrons physically touch should be disinfected between each use.
- Restrooms and other high-touch areas shall be disinfected frequently based on customer volume.
- Service may be declined to patrons who are not wearing masks.